

## Editorial: "Disaster-informed curriculum for social work and welfare education"

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This special edition of *Advances in Social Work and Welfare Education* pulls together several important themes in the challenge that we face, in the Australia-Pacific region and globally, in preparing social work and human service students to respond to disasters professionally, compassionately and with appropriate knowledge and skills.

The articles within this edition take conceptual and practical stances when considering the implications of disaster occurrence, response and recovery upon the educational programs in which our disciplines are taught. Disaster-informed curriculum, as Adamson suggests in the first article, can take both a 'figure' and a 'ground' position – we can see disaster work as a specialty within our programs, but we can also embed it within the already crowded and contested pedagogical space. As Adamson suggests, a focus on disasters can provide a lens through which to view the definition of social work itself.

Shevellar and Westoby continue the challenge within their article, raising questions about the tensions in the relationship between social work and community development in the disaster context. Using the example of Queensland floods, social work involvement in disaster response can, they argue, potentially reconnect social work with its community roots, but to do so requires further research and debate about what social workers actually do within disaster response.

The conceptual debates over the relationship between social work and community development — key to student development within curriculum delivery — are provided with another disaster focus in Hunt, Sargisson, Hamerton and Smith's consideration of community involvement in the Rena oil spill in the Bay of Plenty, New Zealand. Volunteers were interviewed by social work students, whose research and education development was enhanced by real world experience of human rights, ecological and social justice and environmental degradation in a disaster context.

Contributing further to the conceptual discussions in this edition, Marlowe's study of resettled refugee groups in the aftermath of the severe Canterbury earthquakes in 2010–11 in New Zealand provides a thoughtful application of social justice concepts accessible to students and reinforces a definitional and practice approach for social work that is both community-focused and socially just.

The lens in Pease's article shifts from refugee groups to men and masculinity in a disaster context. A gender perspective, he argues, is often missing in research and debate surrounding disaster response, and yet is crucial to the construction of social work curriculum. Men's responses to disasters, their involvement in disaster management and their post-disaster experiences will shape both response and recovery processes in which social work and welfare activity will occur.

Finally, with a focus on disaster pedagogy within a social work program, Pack reports on an extended disaster simulation in the Northern Territories in Australia, a comprehensive example of an integrated and practical disaster curriculum tailored to the remote and rural challenges present within our region. It serves as an illustration of how social work and welfare education can rise to the practical challenge of providing integrated and informed responses to community disaster situations.

It is hoped that the articles within this special edition on 'disaster curriculum' can serve to fuel debates, strengthen knowledge and skills and provide impetus to the development of an informed and compassionate social work and human services workforce equipped to meet the challenges of the disasters yet to come.

**Dr Carole Adamson,**  
University of Auckland  
Guest Editor  
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